

TAB

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VOICE: While you, dear listeners, have turned on your radio sets and are listening, through the noise of the jamming stations, to this commentary, in Sofia, the Journalists Congress has already ended and in one of the Luxury hotels, the Party and government top set are giving a reception for their newspaper friends. Because, as CC Secretary, Venelin Kotzev, stated in the Party CC's greetings to the Congress, "the BCP has always highly valued the role of the press, radio and T.V., as the most effective mass media for spreading Marxist-Leninist ideology, for explaining the Party's policy..." In turn, Albert Cohen, the Director of the Bulgarian Radio, said that "the great task of journalists is to translate important Party and government decisions into newspaper language."

For two days, on the premises of Sofia's "Tears and Laughter" theatre, daily was given a performance called a Journalists Congress, and indeed no better choice could have been made for this show, because, when listening to such statements and greetings, one really is at a loss whether to laugh or weep. Your first impulse is to laugh, but when you start considering just how far our newspapermen have gone, you cannot help wanting to cry. (In any case, the place chosen for the congress, the "Tears and Laughter" theatre, has a symbolic sound about it.)

We should like briefly to take a look at the Party CC's greetings to the Congress, a message, written in that well-worn cliché style of which we are all sick and tired. Reference is to be found in it to "the life-giving Bulgarian-Soviet friendship", to the "gigantic struggle against imperialism, aggression and reaction", to the war in Vietnam, and to the events in the Near East and in Greece. It is bursting with the stereotyped phrases which you read in articles and hear over Sofia Radio.

But it does contain one rather interesting thing. That gifted persons are called upon to join the journalistic ranks, who, "thanks to their inspired creative efforts, will raise the ideological and intellectual stature of Bulgarian journalism." As you can see, the boring monotony of our newspapers has even become too much for the Party leadership, which no longer needs only "lifeless registrants" of its "slogans and decrees". Wanted now are inspired creators, who will passionately propagandize Party ideas and Communist

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Indeed, this is a rather tall order, since true talent, before sitting down to write an article, let us say about the West German "revanchists" or about the "plight" of the West German worker under "capitalist yoke", and then about the paradise on earth that is East Germany, is bound to ask himself - why does the people's government of East Germany need a Berlin Wall; is it to keep the population inside the country? Why is it that those who are groaning under capitalism, are able to leave or enter their country at any time? And why is it that the free people of the countries with people's democracies are denied this right? Why has West Germany not surrounded its frontiers with barbed wire fences, as East Germany has done? - And when he asked himself these questions and found his own answer, the talented one is going to find it difficult to write that article which the Party leadership requires of him. Consequently, the crux of the matter lies not only with the talents: for, it is a question of truth, too. Talented people think, and just this displeases the Party leadership, which wants them to write, but to do the thinking itself: or, in other words, to write what it tells them to write.

Many people in our country have already become accustomed to this Party wish, and the fact that they have done so, has helped them to rise in the administration of Bulgarian journalism, as is, for example, the case with Albert Cohen, the new director of the Bulgarian Radio, whom we already quoted above: "The great task of journalists is to translate important Party and government decisions into newspaper language." - Please, note, dear listeners, not to interpret, not to criticize, not to view from the point of view of whether they are suitable or not, but simply "to translate into newspaper language."

The Bulgarian press is always governed by the axiom - the Party and Government can make no mistakes. Consequently, even then, when crass stupidities are performed, it is its duty to rejoice over them and applaud and call them examples of wisdom. And this is passed down the line from Sofia, to the respective regional newspapers, where every editor will tell you officially that the region can boast no wiser man than the Party First Secretary. Unofficially, of course, he may have quite a different opinion. And here Bulgarian journalists frequently come up against the problem, where do they stand exactly on this social ladder and from what rung downwards they may criticize and what rung upward they may not. Thus, at one of the past journalists congresses it was asked in all earnestness if it is possible to criticize in the central press a deputy minister, or is it only allowed to go as far as a head of a department.

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At the congress, as can so far be seen, this axiom remains in force, even though an appeal has been made to encourage criticism in the press. This criticism is to be up to a certain extent, only so far that it should not clash with the interests or endanger the safety of the top Party leaders. The role of the press as reporter on events in the world, will continue to be belittled, its objectivity continue to be reduced to nil, because although it speaks about truth, the Party, as Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, said, is afraid of the truth.

Among other things, reference is made to truth in the press also in the Party's greetings to the Congress. But this truth is understood not as truth for the world, not as something existing objectively, but as Party truth. And Party truth is something like this: There is a strike in New York - our newspapers scream, let us say "Dead-tired bus drivers leave work. They want better working conditions." But the papers do not say a word about the fact that the drivers are fighting for a four-day week, instead of the five-day one they now have, whereas in Bulgaria drivers work a six-day week. thus, when the other day our newspapers were in such a hurry to reprint the "Pravda" article, telling how anti-Soviet propaganda was being stepped up in the United States in view of the 50th anniversary of the Soviet Union, they forgot to say that citizeness S. Alliluyeva, who is spreading this "propaganda", happens to be the daughter of Stalin. As if the U.S. is to blame that Stalin's daughter rejects her father's paradise and does not want to return there, to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

These methods of journalism have nothing in common in fact with the truth, of which there is so much talk at the journalists congress. Of course, if what is meant is "party" or "socialist truth", then that's another matter.